

REMARKS:

The Examiner is thanked for the Office Action of March 13, 2003, and further thanked for the courtesy of an interview on June 11, 2003. Claims 1-6 and 9-19 are currently pending in the application.

As discussed during the interview, proposed amended claims 1 and 15, which provide that the locking device (or strut) is effective at a region of transition from the axial to the circumferential paths, overcome the art previously made of record.

Applicants request that the claims also include the language that the locking device is effective at least at the region of transition, given the locking device is also effective in other positions (as set forth in the dependent claims). However, the claims still provide that the locking device be effective at the region of transition, which provides the distinguishable characteristic over the prior art. Therefore, Applicants submit that this addition is minor, and the scope of claims 1 and 15 submitted herein conform with the proposed claims that were discussed during the interview.

The Examiner will conduct an updated search before the application can be allowed. It was agreed that in the event this amendment does not place the application in condition for allowance, the finality of the previous Office Action will be withdrawn.

As suggested by the Examiner, applicants have amended claim 1 to provide that the engagement segment (4) and filler neck (23) each have complementary engagement elements. It is believed that this amendment overcomes the Examiner's objection to the drawings.

Applicants have amended claim 2-4 in response to the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Regarding the Examiner's rejections under 35

U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103, it was agreed that amended claims 1 and 15 overcome the art previously made of record, including U.S. Patent Nos. 4,298,129; 3,682,345; and 3,311,250. Specifically, none of the cited references includes a locking device that is effective at least in the transitional region from the axial to circumferential paths, as disclosed and claimed by Applicants.

Pending claims 2-6 and 9-14 are all dependent on claim 1. Claims 16-19 are all dependent on claim 15. As such, Applicants submit that all pending claims distinguish over the prior art of record.

Therefore, Applicants assert that all of the Examiner's objections and rejections have been overcome, and respectfully requests allowance of all pending claims. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned should additional clarification be required. It is believed that no fee is due with this submission. Should that determination be incorrect, then please debit Account No. 50-0548 and notify the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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